

# Collecting Strategies

*Type set? Date/mintmark set? How you organize*

*your collection ultimately is up to you.*



EVERY COIN collection is unique, reflecting its owner's individual approach to the hobby. But while there is considerable diversity in what numismatists collect, decisions about *how* to collect generally focus on two well-established methods. A type collection includes representative examples from many different coin series, while a date/mintmark collection aspires to completeness within a single series. Though different in focus—the breadth of type collecting contrasts with the depth of date/mintmark collecting—they both have an important place in numismatics.

A type collection provides a broad overview of numismatics—20th-century U.S. coins, small cents, dimes, Seated Liberty coins, or pieces produced at the Carson City Mint—and typically contains a single example of each design type within the scope of the set. For instance, a basic type set of 20th-century half dollars would have a Barber, Franklin, Walking Liberty and two Kennedys (one with a standard reverse, and one with a Bicentennial reverse).

Within a particular series, type sets usually account for significant changes. For example, at various times Kennedy halves were 90-percent silver, 40-percent silver or copper-nickel, and each alloy is eligible for inclusion in a type set. Also, major design subtypes, such as the Lincoln cent's Wheat and Lincoln Memorial reverses, usually are represented with separate coins. Minor modifications in design or composition also might be included, depending on

the collector's preferences.

Assembling a type set generally is very economical, both in terms of effort and expenditure, because the coins chosen from each series are entirely up to you. If you're seeking a Lincoln cent for a type set of cents, small cents, 20th-century issues or coins portraying



▲ Type sets can be simple and still show numismatic breadth, as illustrated by a collection that includes Buffalo, Jefferson and Westward Journey nickels.

Presidents, the common 1944 will serve just as well as the rare 1909-S VDB.

Date/mintmark collecting, on the other hand, enables you to pursue a particular interest in detail by acquiring every combination within a specific coin series. This approach is more ex-

pansive—as well as more expensive—than type collecting. Not only are there many more coins to collect, but sooner or later, a date/mintmark collector will encounter “key” dates, like the scarce 1916-D Mercury dime. Every date/mintmark set also involves choices about whether to include collector-only issues like recent S-mint proofs, or die varieties such as the 1955 doubled-die cent.

Your particular collecting approach likely will depend on the interaction of interest and budget. Series with many inexpensive issues, such as Jefferson nickels or Roosevelt dimes, generally are good candidates for date/mintmark collecting. For series that are more elusive, or not currently major interests, you might be satisfied with a single example of the type.

However, there is a middle-of-the-road approach between the breadth of a type set and the depth of a date/mintmark set that I call “concentrated collecting.” This kind of collection contains one example from each decade of a series’ lifespan, and one example from every mint that struck them. Concentrated collections are compact, because the same coin can represent both a decade and a mint.

Take the Morgan dollar, for example. A date/mintmark collection has more than 100 pieces, which can be quite daunting to complete. On the other hand, acquiring only a single example might not seem sufficient for such a sprawling series. A concentrated collection falls between these extremes, capturing the essence of the series with only five coins. There are many ways to represent the series’ five decades and five mints, such as an 1878-CC, 1881-S, 1896(-P), 1903-O and 1921-D. Whichever specific coins you ©

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▲ A 1992 proof set from the U.S. Mint displays representative examples of that year's coinage.

choose, a concentrated collection can be a nice blend of breadth and depth.

Your collection is just that—*your* collection—so its contents and development should reflect your priorities and your preferences. Whether you're pursuing a type collection or a date/mintmark collection, or mixing these methodologies, a definite collecting approach will help you achieve your collecting goals.

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